

ACHIEVEMENTS AND AIMS OF THE STATE'S MEDICAL PROFESSION

The Record of the Year and a Program of Activity for the Future Set Out in Address of Retiring President, L. B. McBrayer.

(Address of Dr. L. B. McBrayer, retiring president of the North Carolina Medical Society, delivered last Tuesday at the opening session of the annual convention of the society in Greensboro. Dr. McBrayer is the president of the State Tuberculosis Sanatorium at Sanatorium.)

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Medical Society of the State of North Carolina, Ladies and Gentlemen: I appear before you this morning to return to you the trust reposed in me one year ago—its honor is unsullied, we have kept the faith. However, we have not accomplished what ought to have been accomplished nor what we wanted to accomplish. For our shortcomings we crave your forgiveness.

It is common to hear the retiring president speak of the appreciation of the honor conferred upon him—the highest honor in the gift of this society—and emphasize his appreciation, if possible, by calling to witness the high standing, natural and professional ability, and great accomplishments of the men in our profession whom you have honored in like manner. Let me say that none who have occupied this office in years gone by are more appreciative than the speaker.

We should never forget, however, that honors never fail to bring responsibilities, and we cannot, if we would, accept the one without having placed on us the other. We felt one year ago—and we feel it more keenly today—how undeserving of this high honor, and how little able we were to shoulder the responsibilities of this office; and but for your confidence and support the honor never would have been given to me; but for your cordial support, cooperation and encouragement, the responsibilities would have been too heavy to bear. And may I crave your continued support, cooperation and encouragement through this session and for all time?

Complete File of Proceedings.

Our secretary, Dr. John A. Ferrell, has been faithful and persistent and has finally secured a complete set of the transactions of this society from its organization to date and has had them bound. In securing this complete set, our thanks are due Dr. Walter C. Murphy, No. 507 Fourth street, N. W. Washington, D. C., a former member of this society and a former secretary, but now resident at the above address, who kindly donated to the society a complete set of the transactions from the origin of the society in 1849 up to 1890, excepting volumes for the years 1880, 1883, 1885, 1889 and 1890. The society had the volumes from 1891 to 1914 inclusive, excepting the year 1898. We would recommend that this complete set of the transactions of this society be placed in the state library at Raleigh and that a paster should be placed on the fly-leaf of each volume indicating the donor, so that any physician in the State or other persons in the State might have access to them and perhaps for the more important reason that we would be kept intact and not be lost in transferring from one secretary to another. In fact, your present officers tacitly agreed to this arrangement before this splendid donation of Dr. Murphy's could be available. We trust the society at this meeting will take whatever action necessary to carry out this suggestion.

Dr. C. S. Mangum has also procured almost a complete set for the University Library, and two or three physicians in the State have complete sets, which they prize very highly.

Complete List of Membership.

The secretary has also compiled a complete list of the membership of this society to date. Much of this valuable work was done by Dr. J. Howell Way when he magnified the office of secretary. We would recommend that the incoming secretary be authorized and instructed to go a step further and secure and keep intact a file of all the legal practitioners in North Carolina and that he furnish a list of the same to the collectors of internal revenue in North Carolina, in order that they might be aided in enforcing the law in regard to the prescribing of narcotics. We would further recommend that the officers of this society be instructed to cooperate with the collectors of internal revenue in North Carolina in any other way possible in the enforcement of this law. The symposium on narcotics which will be presented at this session should call the attention of the profession, and we trust the people, of the State, to the destruction brought to our people by the use of narcotics, and we would recommend that an additional committee of three or five be appointed to co-operate with our committee on public policy and legislation to bring the matter to the attention of the people of our State, and especially to bring the matter to the attention of the next General Assembly.

State Board of Health.

It is a great pleasure to note the efficiency of our State Board of Health and the efficient and constructive

health work it is doing. This Society, and the people of the State as well, will no doubt be pleased to know that North Carolina is beginning to be looked up to by the other Southern States as a State who leads in public health work. The plans of the State Board of Health are well considered and their policies are constructive, and with Dr. W. S. Rankin as executive officer, these plans and policies are well carried out. I bespeak for the State Board of Health the continued loyal and hearty co-operation of every member of this Society.

Health Officer.

The health officer is in greater and greater demand throughout the State of North Carolina, and even now some ten or twelve men are devoting their whole time to this work, at a fairly remunerative salary. The demand for first-class health officers in North Carolina will increase rapidly as the days go by; not only in North Carolina, but in every medium sized town and in a large percentage of counties in every State in the Union. The health officer, whether city or county, is peculiarly the function of the physician. The sanitary engineer, the public health nurse, cannot now nor can they ever take the place of the physician as health officer. However, if the physicians sit idly by and do not meet the demands or do not show sufficient interest to place one of their profession where a health officer is needed, the sanitary engineer is not to be blamed if he places one of his profession in such place. We delight to honor Col. Goethals in accomplishing the splendid feat of engineering in the construction of the Panama Canal, but it was not an engineer that discovered the method of transmission of yellow fever and of malaria, without which discovery the building of the Panama Canal would have remained impossible. It is the physician who has made the profession of sanitary engineering possible, and more honor is due Col. Gorgas and the men who discovered the methods of transmission of yellow fever and malaria than is due Colonel Goethals.

The public health nurse is an important factor in the campaign against disease, just as is the sanitary engineer. The physician in reality makes the nurse. He has at all times and does now and will ever make this nurse, of whatever title, possible; and the nurse who assumes that she knows more than the physician in public health work or in any other kind of work in her profession is making an egregious blunder. The physicians must furnish the health officers of this country; they have never failed to measure up to their opportunity or to their responsibility, and they will not fail in this instance. A few of the best schools have put on a course for health officers, at the completion of which they confer the degree of doctor of public health. It is proper to make mention in this connection of the fact that Dr. W. S. Rankin, secretary of our State Board of Health, has outlined a plan for training health officers which in the opinion of those competent to judge will give a physician far better training than can be given in the schools offering the degree of doctor of public health, this training, of course, presupposing a certain amount of knowledge of public health work to begin with.

The Control of Cancer.

The increasing number of deaths from cancer means, more than anything else, that the physicians do not pay that attention to the early lesions that the importance of these early lesions demands. Our knowledge is not sufficient at this time to enable us to speak of the prevention of cancer, but knowing that in the large per cent of cases if the early lesions were properly treated the death rate from cancer would be reduced fifty per cent or more, it is proper to speak of the control of cancer. Until our research workers have given us more information in regard to the cause of cancer, the fight resolves itself into obtaining the co-operation of the physicians in treating the early manifestations of cancer and in educating the people to understand what these early manifestations are and what they mean. It is with pleasure that we note in the last few months that Dr. John Wesley Long has been appointed a member of the American Society for the Control of Cancer and that through him a good, large committee of surgeons of this State has been formed into a State committee for the control of cancer. It is hoped that the formation of this committee of surgeons will serve to interest more deeply the surgeons of North Carolina in the prevention of disease. It is apparent, however, that unless this committee correlates itself with the State Board of Health that the publicity work necessary to carry out the procedures mentioned above will not be obtained, as this committee will not be able to afford either the time or the expense necessary.

Tuberculosis.

Modesty forbids my saying anything in regard to the fight against tuberculosis that is now joined in North Carolina except to emphasize the fact

that in this fight the North Carolina doctor has an important part to play.

He is on the picket line and must scent the approach of this arch enemy of our civilization, of our people, when yet in the distance and sound the alarm.

Unless the doctors in the State, acting in their capacity as pickets, report the location of the enemy, we will enter the fight with a heavy handicap.

Early diagnosis of tuberculosis is of equal importance with the early diagnosis of appendicitis, and there is no excuse for a physician in North Carolina, no matter how poorly prepared, failing to make diagnosis in a case of tuberculosis until all the people of average intelligence in the neighborhood have made the diagnosis from the general symptoms.

There are certain clinical symptoms that can be reported by an average nurse or intelligent person in the family or community, that point so strongly to tuberculosis that a diagnosis is demanded, at least until it is proven otherwise by an expert diagnostician after careful and pains-taking examination; and the people are becoming more and more familiar with these clinical symptoms, just as they are with the clinical symptoms of appendicitis, and are demanding that the doctors shall at least advance as rapidly as they in the diagnostic knowledge of tuberculosis; and the doctor in North Carolina who does not do this will appear to bad advantage among his clientele.

In this connection let me say that tuberculosis is a contagious disease. It has been placed in this category by more than one State Board of Health and it is a reportable disease under the jurisdiction of every board of health deserving the name. It is then just as much the province of the health officer to give expert diagnosis in tuberculosis suspects as it is in suspects of diphtheria, scarlet fever, smallpox or any other contagious disease. To this end the State Board of Health has provided that any health officer may spend a week or a month or as long as he desires at the State Sanatorium, perfecting himself in the diagnosis of tuberculosis, and the hygienic handling of the same, without expense to him.

Conservation of Vision.

The President took the authority to form a section on the conservation of vision for this session. We feel that this is a very important matter in North Carolina at this time. The State has been providing as best it could for the education of the blind in our State and has done well. The State School for the Blind at Raleigh, under the direction of that able champion of the cause of the blind and splendid superintendent of the school, has been turning the blind paupers of our State into self-supporting citizens. The State School for the Blind, then, is an economic institution of far-reaching importance. However, it would seem that when one-third of the blindness in North Carolina can be prevented by the expenditure of two or three cents per head or less, that we are pursuing a very short-sighted, not to say foolish, policy. It would seem that it would be very much better to build a fence along the edge of the precipice to keep people from falling over, rather than maintain an ambulance in the valley below, and a State school for the blind. The medical profession, as in all other matters medical, must use their influence and expend their efforts and intelligence to bring about the desired result in this particular instance. I would therefore recommend that this Society form a permanent committee on the conservation of vision. The title would perhaps better be "The Commission of the Medical Society of the State of North Carolina for the Conservation of Vision," this commission to act in conjunction with the State Superintendent of the Blind and his Board in conducting an educational campaign throughout the State for the prevention of blindness and for the enforcement of the wholesome laws passed by our last General Assembly. The Secretary of the State Board of Health to be ex-officio a member of this commission.

Narcotics.

The use of narcotics in our State affects so vitally the mental and physical health of our people that I feel compelled to bring again the matter to your attention. In doing so I feel that I cannot do better than to refer you to the comprehensive and pointed statement on this subject contained in the president's address of Dr. J. M. Parrott last year, found on pages 25 and 26 of the proceedings of 1914, and, but for the time required to read it, would embody it as a whole. The records of our insane hospitals show that 50 per cent of the patients are there on account of the use of narcotics. We are spending nearly three-quarters of a million dollars every year caring for those we have there, to say nothing of the cost of the buildings and grounds, and there are yet a few hundred insane people in the State who cannot be admitted for want of room. When it is positively known that we could save three hundred and fifty thousand dollars annually in the maintenance of our insane hospitals by stopping the use of narcotics—whiskey, opium, cocaine, etc.—it would seem that we would do it as an economic proposition. Until we do this we should at least make preparation and treat these habits before they become insane and save them to their family, their friends and the State, and make them an economic asset instead of a total loss. Again we are maintaining an ambulance service in the valley below at great cost, rather than spend a few dollars to build a fence along the edge of the precipice

to keep our people from falling. Again the doctor in North Carolina plays an important role. The doctors of North Carolina must work out these problems, and they have much to do with the enforcement of the whiskey and narcotic laws.

These things will be fully discussed in the splendid symposium on narcotics that forms an important part of the program of this meeting, and for that reason I leave the subject without further comment, except to say that whiskey or opium or cocaine is just as harmful when put up in bottles and labeled patent medicines and sold through advertisements in religious papers as it is when it is labelled whiskey and sold in a bar room or labelled opium, with the skull and cross-bones displayed on wrapper, and sold through a drug store. And it is high time that the religious, and all other self-respecting newspapers in our State, cut themselves loose from the unholy alliance with the patent medicine frauds, by which alliance they are aiding and abetting in the sale of liquor, opium, cocaine, etc., to the people of our State (it is worthy of mention that the denominational paper of the Methodist Church in this State has already severed this alliance), or else they should come out boldly and say that they are opposed to the prohibition law; that they are opposed to restricting the sale of narcotics, and that they are in favor of perpetuating a practice that is destroying increasingly large numbers of our people—mind, body and soul.

The Last General Assembly.

It was a great pleasure to note the influence of the medical profession in North Carolina as shown in the last General Assembly. The improvement, or the increase of the stringency of the prohibition laws of the State would never have been considered for a moment had it not been for the action taken by this Society at the session in Raleigh June, 1914, in regard to the prescribing of alcohol as a therapeutic agent, the said action being perhaps largely a result of the splendid deliverance of the president, Dr. James M. Parrott, on the this subject in his president's address. It was openly stated by the strongest advocates of the prohibition measures that they would not vote for any further extension of the prohibition laws as long as whiskey was sold at the drug stores; but as soon as your president and your committee on public safety and legislation stated the attitude of the State Medical Society these same men were willing to go to any limit in the prohibition of the sale of alcohol in North Carolina.

We desire also to express our appreciation of the similar position taken by and the influence of the North Carolina Pharmaceutical Association in regard to the sale of alcohol by drug stores in North Carolina.

A letter from a gentleman in this State who is a close observer of men and measures stated that our Society had done more toward decreasing the consumption of whiskey in North Carolina than any other organization except the church.

And it is perhaps not improper for me to say at this time that this action by our Society has increased largely the esteem and confidence of our people for the medical profession in our State.

May I state also that the non-medical men in the General Assembly were thoroughly informed in regard to these matters and in regard to public health matters in general. As an evidence of their intelligence in this matter we might call to witness the fact that when the only untoward bill, medical or health, was introduced in the General Assembly providing for opening the sale of opium and its derivatives, the Committee on Health voted unanimously to report the bill unfavorably and it was killed then and there.

Every bill affecting the medical profession, all considered constructive and progressive, was passed without amendment and without opposition. Among these we might mention the divorcing of the meeting of the Board of Medical Examiners from the meeting of this Society and holding the main meeting annually in the city of Raleigh, at such time as the Board of Examiners may decide, and holding a second meeting during the year if desired, and abolishing the temporary license. It remains to be seen whether or not this law is wise. It may be that it will place additional burdens on the Board of Examiners, who I am quite sure are sufficiently burdened already, and it certainly takes the board meeting and the young doctors who are participating away from the influence of this Society just at a time when the young doctors are entering the profession in our State, and when they should be brought under the wholesome influence and made to feel the importance of allying themselves with the organized profession in our State as represented by this Society. Let us hope that this is not the beginning of the time when the Board of Medical Examiners shall be completely cut loose from this Society and become a trophy of ordinary politics.

Another important piece of medical legislation was that allowing medical students who have completed the first two years in medicine, at a medical college accredited by our Board, to be admitted to examination on the two years work upon the payment of a fee of \$7.50 and to have credit for the marks made at his final examination after receiving his degree. There is no real objection to this law, and it should give encouragement to the two year medical schools in our State.

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